

Need Training for a Job?

Before you sign up for a vocational school or correspondence course:

1. Define your goals.

Do you want to learn a skill, prepare for a test, get a job, or get a license or certification?

2. Comparison shop.

Look at the choices. Which schools offer the best combination of affordable fees and a solid education? Does on-the-job training, a community college program, an online course, or a vocational school make the most sense? Your high school counselor can help you find answers to those questions.

3. Do a background check.

Ask employers you might want to work for what they think about the school. Talk to recent graduates to ask about their experience at the school. Visit the school when class is in session. Stick around to talk to current students. Contact the agency that licenses or accredits the school to see whether it meets required standards. Check with your local Better Business Bureau (or visit www.bbb.com) to find out whether there have been any complaints about the school.

Important Points:

Take your time. Don't sign a contract until you've read it ... and understood it. Ask questions about repayment terms, refund and cancellation policies, and finding a job after you finish the course. What happens if you have to quit before you finish? It's a good idea to ask someone you trust to read and evaluate the forms, too.

If you're unhappy with the school or program you chose—or if you think you were misled—complain. To whom? The agency that licenses or accredits the school, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Better Business Bureau.

For further information about choosing a vocational school, access the Consumer Protection area of the Federal Trade Commission's Web site at www.ftc.gov/conline/pubs/services/votech.shtm.

